

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 TEL AVIV 005022

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [IS](#) [KPAL](#) [PREL](#) [XF](#) [GAZA](#) [DISENGAGEMENT](#) [GOI](#) [INTERNAL](#) [PEACE](#) [PROCESS](#)

SUBJECT: SHARON: DISENGAGEMENT IS "COMPLICATED, PAINFUL AND HARD" BUT IT CAN PAVE THE WAY BACK TO THE ROADMAP

1. Prime Minister Sharon met August 14 with an AIPAC-sponsored Congressional delegation headed by Congressman Steny Hoyer and comprised of 10 Democratic Members of the House. AIPAC board members and staffers attended. Ambassador Kurtzer also joined the meeting. Sharon was relaxed and voluble, telling the delegation that he valued the time spent with them when his phone would not be ringing with calls from disengagement opponents.

Disengagement

2. Sharon said that Israel's disengagement plan is "very complicated, painful and hard" but there is no better plan available to solve problems and pave the way back to the roadmap. Sharon said Palestinians know there must be a full cessation of terrorism, violence and incitement, and there must be security reforms in order to return to the roadmap. Israel is a peace-seeking and courageous country, Sharon said, and it is the only place where Jews have the right and the power to defend themselves by themselves. Sharon continued that he is ready for painful compromises for a genuine and durable peace, but he made equally clear that Israel will make no compromises on security. Sharon emphasized that only Israel can decide what security it requires.

3. Sharon told the delegation that Palestinian terror continues even now, and that terrorism is causing a decline in the support of the Israeli people for disengagement. Sharon and his senior advisor, Dov Weissglas, noted the press conference given the evening before by the leadership of Hamas in Gaza in which Hamas promised brazenly to resume terrorism against Israel as soon as the disengagement is completed.

4. Sharon said that Israel wants the Palestinian Authority, not Hamas, to control Gaza after disengagement. He told the delegation that, if terrorists attack during disengagement, Israel's reaction will be "very, very hard." He predicted that the disengagement process will take several weeks to finish, because of the 4-5,000 "radical youngsters" who infiltrated Gaza in recent weeks.

Palestinian Security

5. Weissglas told the delegation that Palestinians have the ability to enforce security, and there are two detailed plans (Tenet and Zinni) that specify how to dismantle terrorist organizations. Whereas the PA has a significant manpower advantage to get the job done, whether this is done is a question of will.

6. Sharon pointed to President Bush's interview, aired on Israeli television August 13, as proof that the U.S. is trying to pressure President Abbas to clamp down on security. Sharon said that Abbas recognizes the danger that terrorism poses for Palestinians, but the question is whether he is ready to act. Sharon termed it a "major mistake" that Abbas signed an agreement with the terrorist organizations in which he committed the PA not to act against them. Sharon said that the PA has a greater ability to act than they claim. The problem is will and whether the PA is eager to take hard steps. Sharon repeated that Abbas seems to prefer to reach agreements with terror organizations, even when they announce publicly their intention to continue terrorism.

7. Asked whether the PA has the mechanisms to act against terror, Weissglas responded that Palestinians live in a "tribal society" in which every villager knows whose doing what. The PA thus would not have a problem collecting intelligence against terrorists. Sharon said that Israel cannot be responsible for organizing the way Abbas deals with terrorism. If Hamas does continue to engage in terrorism, Sharon said he hopes the PA will act, but if not Israel will find a way to stop the terrorism. "We are not going to live under terror."

Iran

18. Asked about Iran, Sharon said he sees no change in Iran's intention and plan to have nuclear weapons. Sharon said Iran should be brought to the U.N. Security Council, and diplomatic and economic pressures should be brought to bear on Iran. Sharon continued that Iran is the "center of world terrorism" and he pointed to Iranian support for Hizbollah in Lebanon. Sharon noted that Hizbollah has becoming involved increasingly in terrorism against Israel with the assistance of some Israeli-Arabs.

Egypt

19. Sharon said that relations with Egypt are improving and that several long-standing problems (such as the Azzam Azzam case) had been resolved. The Egyptians are making an effort to help, Sharon said, but they could do more. After explaining the issue of the Philadelphi Strip, Sharon said that he looks forward to Egypt's deployment on the Gaza border, but, in fact, will not rely on anyone else to defend Israel. He noted that the Israel-Egypt peace treaty remains intact, but Egypt is still active in trying to secure support for a boycott of Israel. Sharon said you cannot find a map of the Middle East in Egyptian schools which shows Israel. In this regard, Sharon said, the main problem in the region is that the Arabs have never recognized the birthright of the Jews to have an independent Jewish state in the homeland of the Jewish people.

U.S. Assistance

10. Weissglas explained the background to Israel's request for more than \$2 billion in assistance. He said that the assistance is not directly related to disengagement, but rather would be a sign of U.S. support as Israel withdraws from Gaza. Sharon added that Israel very much wants to develop the northern and southern parts of the country and would use U.S. assistance in support of this development. Weissglas asked the delegation for public statements of support in order to show the Israeli people that positive things will emerge from disengagement.

Fence and Outposts

11. Asked about the security fence, Weissglas said the fence is being constructed for purely security reasons. He noted that "85 percent" of Israeli casualties resulted from suicide bombs, car bombs, and roadside shootings, and the fence would help stop prevent these. At the same time, he admitted, Israel has tried to include in the fence those settlement blocs whose "life fabric" is west of the fence, while not separating Palestinians from their livelihood. Weissglas suggested to the delegation that the fence be named for Yasser Arafat.

12. On outposts, Weissglas said, Israel has an obligation in the roadmap to dismantle outposts. The GOI has found it much more complicated legally to do so than initially anticipated. He predicted that the dismantling of the outposts would start soon after the disengagement.

Visit Embassy Tel Aviv's Classified Website:
<http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/nea/telaviv>

You can also access this site through the State Department's
Classified SIPRNET website.

KURTZER